

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01  
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R 091137Z JUN 78  
FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8850  
INFO AMCONSUL IBADAN  
AMCONSUL KADUNA

C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 7142

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PGOV, PDEV, NI  
SUBJECT: GROWING CONCERN OVER COMMUNAL TENSION

REF: (A) KADUNA 672, (B) LAGOS A-68, (C) LAGOS A-67

1. ACCORDING TO A JUNE 9 DAILY TIMES REPORT, THE ANGLICAN BISHOP OWERRI DIOCESE, RT. REV. BISHOP B.C. NWANKITI, HAS MADE AN APPEAL FOR CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS TO COOPERATE AND LIVE TOGETHER IN HARMONY. SPEAKING IN KANO WHILE LAUNCHING THE OWERRI ANGLICAN CATHEDRAL FUND, BISHOP NWANKITI SAID THAT COOPERATION WAS THE WAY TO ENSURE ADEQUATE PROPAGATION OF BOTH THE TEACHINGS OF MOHAMMED AND CHRIST. SUCH COOPERATION, ACCORDING TO THE BISHOP, WAS NEEDED TO CEMENT THE SOLIDARITY AND UNITY OF NIGERIA.

2. COMMENT: IN OUR VIEW, BISHOP NWANKITI'S REMARKS ARE ANOTHER REFLECTION OF THE GRADUALLY INCREASING CONCERN DEVELOPING HERE ABOUT COMMUNAL TENSIONS AND THEIR POSSIBLE IMPACT ON A RETURN TO CIVILIAN RULE IN 1979. IN A SIMILAR VEIN, IN CONVERSATION WITH AN EMBASSY OFFICER ON JUNE 8, DAILY TIMES (DT) POLITICAL  
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CORRESPONDENT RUFAI IBRAHIM SAID THAT HE HAD BECOME "PRETTY PESSIMISTIC" ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF A SUCCESSFUL RETURN TO CIVILIAN RULE IN 1979. IBRAHIM, WHO COVERS THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY, SAID THAT HIS BIGGEST FEAR WAS THAT COMMUNAL VIOLENCE ENGENDERED BY POLITICAL COMPETITION WILL BREAK OUT IN THE COUNTRY, PARTICULARLY IN THE NORTH, AND THE SECURITY FORCES WILL NOT

BE ABLE TO CONTAIN THE SITUATION. IBRAHIM WAS PARTICULARLY DISTURBED BY THE INABILITY OF THE POLICE TO CONTROL THE STUDENTS DURING THE RECENT DISTURBANCES. "IF THEY CAN'T CONTROL THE STUDENTS, HOW CAN THEY CONTROL THE NORTH?"

3. CONCERNING THE NORTH, IBRAHIM SAID THAT THE SHARIA BATTLE IN THE CA HAD DEMONSTRATED THAT THE NORTH WILL NO LONGER AUTOMATICALLY CONTROL THE COUNTRY IN A CONVENTIONAL POLITICAL SYSTEM. THAT FACT WILL "BE HARD FOR THE NORTH TO LIVE WITH" AND COULD GENERATE COMMUNAL VIOLENCE SUCH AS THAT IN 1965. FOR EXAMPLE, DURING THE APRIL EVENTS, THE DT GOT REPORTS THAT ON ONE PARTICULAR WEEKEND MUSLIM "FANATICS" IN KADUNA INTENDED PHYSICALLY TO PREVENT CHRISTIANS FROM ATTENDING CHURCH TO MAKE THE POINT THAT ISLAM INCLUDING SHARIA IS A WAY OF LIFE, NOT JUST A RELIGION, AND THEREFORE CHRISTIANS SHOULD NOT BE ABLE TO PRACITCE THEIR RELIGION IF MUSLIMS CANNOT HAVE SHARIA. IBRAHIM SAID THAT AT ONE POINT IN APRIL, HE WAS TEMPTED TO LEAVE LAGOS AND TO GO BACK TO THE NORTH BECAUSE THIS TIME, IF THERE IS COMMUNAL VIOLENCE IN THR NORTH, PEOPLE IN THE SOUTH CAN BE EXPECTED TO RETALIATE.

4. ON THE RECENT REPORTS OF COMMUNAL TENSION IN THE  
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NORTH (REFS A AND B), IBRAHIM SAID THAT THE DT REGULARLY RECEIVES SIMILAR REPORTS FROM ITS CORRESPONDENTS IN NORTHERN CITIES AND HAS ADOPTED A FIRM POLICY NOT TO PUBLISH ANY OF THEM. END COMMENT  
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## Message Attributes

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